Chapter 6.2
Balancing Green ICT Business Development with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

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ABSTRACT

The debate over green ICT has been triggered by media during the climate change summit in Kyoto in 2007. This was when the industry tried to build up a clean and non-polluting image. While the Copenhagen summit on the environment failed to produce a conclusive decision, it is now clear that its carbon footprint is a remarkable factor in all business decision making. Governments around the world have set up defined programs and targets that companies have to reach. ICT is aimed at achieving reduction in the 2% of CO2 emission levels. The advantage of the positive impact of Green ICT initiatives would be seen in the clear results in management's decision making. However, the adoption of green ICT programs gives the opportunity to fully rethink over current business process and develop new solutions. The benefit of environmental friendly companies can also affect the overall performance and deliver measurable results in terms of customer's preference, brand value, ROI, not to count the needed change of behaviour at individual and personal level (such as waste disposal). The chapter wants to outline those topics and properly address the issues behind what the author considers as equivalent to the next industrial revolution.

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INTRODUCTION

The ICT industry has a very significant role to play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, especially in rapidly developing countries. Future development in the newly developing industries should not follow the reckless path taken by developed countries. Many industries can make use of modern ICT technology to move into higher efficiency low carbon markets. This can include use of ICT technology to move away from existing energy-intensive work habits and lifestyles supported by government policy innovations, incentives for companies and the active participation of consumers. These initiatives are urgent as the accumulation of greenhouse gases (GHG) in the atmosphere is happening faster than originally predicted. Scientists, economists and policy makers are calling for emissions targets of at least 20% below 1990 levels in 2020 (The climate group 2008; Gartner 2007/2008; Hendrik and Volk 2008). The work by climate group as well as the aforementioned Gartner report has identified many opportunities for the ICT industry, to replace goods and services with virtual equivalents and to provide technology to enable energy efficiency including:

- Develop an agreed ICT industry-wide methodology for the carbon foot-printing of ICT products and services
- Put more emphasis on climate change issues in our supply chain work so we influence the end-to-end manufacturing process for electronic equipment
- Ensure that energy and climate change matters are fully considered by the organisations that set the technical standards for our industry (A.T. Kearney 2008; ACS 2007; Bouwer 2006)
- Work with organisations in the key opportunity areas – travel/transport, buildings, grids and industry systems – to help turn potential CO2 reductions into reality. This will include a strong emphasis on the significant opportunities offered by de-materialisation (A.T. Kearney 2008; ACS 2007; Bouwer 2006)
- Work with public policy makers to ensure that the right regulatory and fiscal frameworks are in place to move us all in the right direction (EICTA 2008; EU Commission 2002; Experton 2007.1/2; Experton 2008)

The ICT sector has both a profitable opportunity and a critical role to play with other sectors to design and deploy solutions needed to create a low carbon society (EICTA 2008; EU Commission 2002; Experton 2007.1/2; Experton 2008). The scale of emissions reductions that could be enabled by the smart integration of ICT into new ways of operating, living, working, learning and travelling makes the sector a key player in the fight against climate change, despite its own growing carbon footprint. However, this ICT potential also comes with corresponding responsibility. Emissions reductions in other sectors will not simply present themselves; the ICT sector must demonstrate leadership on climate change and governments must provide the optimum regulatory context. These actions can be summarised as the SMART transformation (The climate group 2008; Gartner 2007/2008; Hendrik and Volk 2008). The challenge of climate change presents an opportunity for ICT to first standardise (S) how energy consumption and emissions information can be traced across different processes. It can monitor (M) energy consumption and emissions across the economy in real time, providing the data needed to optimise for energy efficiency. Network tools can be developed that allow accountability (A) for energy consumption and emissions alongside other key business priorities. This information can be used to rethink (R) how we should live, learn, play and work in a low carbon economy, initially by optimising efficiency, but also by providing viable low cost alternatives to high carbon activities. It is through this enabling platform that transformation (T) of the economy will occur,